

**Guide for Parents of a Preschool Blind  
Child**

*Gertrude Van den Broek*

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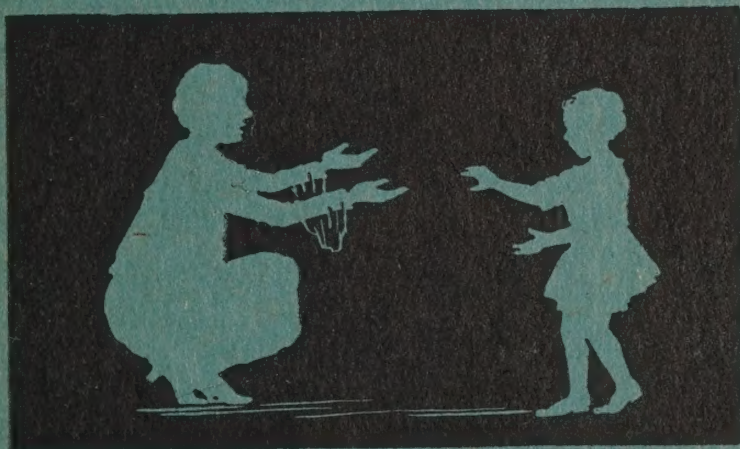
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COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND  
of the  
NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF  
SOCIAL WELFARE

New York, N. Y.



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By Gertrude Van den Broek

JUNE 1948

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## Foreword

The Preschool Service to parents of blind children is the outgrowth of years of study and observation of blind adults who have come to the Commission for the Blind for advice and help. Evidences of early retardation in development and of maladjustment to the seeing world were manifest in many cases. The need for guidance and developmental training in the early years of life, when habits and behavior patterns are formed, led the Commission to establish this important service for blind children in New York State. In 1933, a temporary Preschool Educator was engaged to study the background and needs of this group of young blind children.

Following a successful experimental period, the Commission adopted a Preschool Program in consultation with the Cornell Nursery School and Teachers College of Columbia University. The services of Miss Gertrude Van den Broek were secured as Preschool Educator. In addition to Miss Van den Broek's education and experience in child psychology and preschool methods, she brought to the work additional medical knowledge as a graduate nurse. She is thus able to contribute not only to the psychological needs of these children but also to their physical development, which is of particular importance in striving for the highest possible degree of normalcy as an offset to visual handicaps.

This pamphlet by Miss Van den Broek represents the results of sympathetic study and training of numerous preschool blind children in their home environment over a period of seven years. It is hoped that parents will find it a truly useful and helpful guide.

Grace S. Harper  
*Director*







## CONTENTS

Introduction .....	7
I. Judging the Child's Situation .....	9
<i>The Main Essentials</i> .....	9
<i>Parents' Attitudes</i> .....	12
<i>Relationship to the Child</i> .....	14
<i>Problems Arising from Blindness</i> .....	16
II. The Child's Physical Development and Needs ....	21
<i>The Physical Effects of Blindness</i> .....	21
III. The Child's Emotional and Social Development ..	25
<i>The Child's Place in the Family</i> .....	28
IV. The Child's Mental Development and Needs ....	31
V. The Child's Spiritual Life .....	35
<i>The Place of Music and Literature</i> .....	35
VI. What to Expect of Your Child .....	37
<i>Formal Education</i> .....	44
Suggested Books .....	48

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## *Introduction*

It has long been recognized that the foundation of a child's character and future is laid during the preschool years. The patterns of feeling, thinking and behaving he acquires during this period are likely to remain with him through life. The *kind* of personality he thus gradually develops will either help or hinder him in realizing his aims in life.

If you have a small child who is blind, or whose vision is seriously impaired, you will not need to be told that he is more dependent upon your intelligent care and devotion than other children, and that you yourself may need some special advice and guidance in helping him to meet his problems.

The moment you know of his eye difficulty, your love and sympathy for him should lead you to seek the kind of knowledge which will give you understanding of his opportunities as well as his limitations. Some needs of the blind child are special and specific, and you will want to be informed about them as soon as possible. Very early in life the blind baby requires, for example, greater stimulation and more frequent change of position than the seeing baby.

Sometimes an intelligent child with a will to succeed attains a happy adjustment with the help of wise and sensitive parents without guidance from a professional person. This, however, is rather unusual, and most parents are glad to learn that there is someone with the required knowledge to whom they can turn.

This pamphlet presents points on such guidance and outlines a background against which you may judge your child's progress and accomplishment with reasonable accuracy. It is written expressly for parents of blind children. Blindness, we must remember, is a matter of degree of vision; few people, although technically considered blind, are totally deprived of all visual impressions. Thus the term "blind children," as used here, includes those who have *some* vision. Almost all of these children, however, will prove to have insufficient vision to profit by ordinary public school education when they



have reached school age. A few of them will be able to enter a sight-saving class, which uses special equipment and books printed in large type, instead of a school for the blind, where Braille is taught.

Other pamphlets and certain books treating special aspects of the preschool child more fully are listed at the end of this booklet, along with some recommended publications dealing with the sighted child of preschool age.



## JUDGING THE CHILD'S SITUATION

We should learn to judge and to treat the handicapped child fairly. To indulge him is to deprive him of the special guidance to which he is entitled. Something must be expected of him, as of all children; yet, to expect too much would be discouraging. The effect of the mistaken idea that things should be done for him, that he need not be taught to take responsibility, that other children must give in to him—in short, spoiling him—is always disastrous. To arrive at a fair judgment of the handicapped child requires some knowledge of the effect of blindness upon him and upon others, as well as some understanding of standards of normal development.

The effect of blindness upon the child's general development will be largely determined *first*, by the degree of blindness; *secondly*, by his general intelligence; and *thirdly*, by his environment, including the people who play a dominant role in his life.

### THE MAIN ESSENTIALS

Because of the importance of early childhood as the crucial, formative period, we must be concerned with what the baby finds to “work with” during these early years.

#### GROWTH OF AN INDIVIDUAL

An individual grows through his interaction with his environment. The success and the happiness a person is likely to achieve in life depends to a large extent upon the opinion he forms of himself and the degree to which he can satisfy his needs and desires.

This growth starts at birth and continues throughout life. Through experimentation with his physical environment, in the form of work and play, he gradually gains mastery over it and learns to make it serve him. By comparing his success in this regard with the success of others, and by means of other people's behavior towards him, he forms an estimate of himself as a human being. If all goes well, every child



learns that although incapable of succeeding in some directions, he is capable of succeeding in others and is of worth in himself. All persons go through this process and are particularly conscious of it in childhood and early adulthood. Because the handicapped child's opportunities for the development of his talents are more limited and because he is more influenced by other people's — often mistaken — notions about his limitations, it is not easy for him to form a true estimate of himself. It does him great credit, therefore, if he is able to establish a sound self-appraisal and becomes a well-adjusted person. We can render him no greater service than to help him attain this; and no one is in a better position to do this than his parents or guardians.

#### FINDING HIS PLACE IN LIFE

This brief description of the marvelous, complex process of human growth is admittedly over-simplified, but it serves to call attention to what is really the main problem of the handicapped child — that of finding his true place in life. Your desire to help your child is hereby directed to this, his chief problem. You will want to focus your attention, then, on the psychological and human aspects of his environment, for they are of prime importance.

In general, many of us are aware of the greater significance of the non-physical aspects over the physical aspects of an environment. We realize, for example, that a luxurious home may be wretchedly inadequate and unhappy because it is without spiritual resources, while a poor home bereft of physical comforts may be rich in priceless affection and spiritual values. Every child should find the members of his family ready to give him affection, call his attention to spiritual values, learn what they can and must expect of him, understand what and how he should be taught, and provide him with the opportunity to learn by doing.

#### REQUIREMENTS FOR HELPING

Let us examine these requirements more closely:

*Love or affection* is seldom missing entirely, which is indeed fortunate, for, without it, human life all



but perishes. To “reject” one’s own child, for any reason whatsoever, is always a tragic mistake.

*Spiritual values* are not necessarily those associated with religious services. They may be values in daily experiences, such as love, friendship, understanding, goodwill and tolerance, which bring us happiness and prompt us to rise above pettiness, selfishness, bickering and meanness.

*What to expect of the child* involves consideration of several factors, such as his age, his apparent capacity, and the amount of effort he puts forth. Parents should check or compare their own estimate with that of a person who knows what normal blind children of a certain age are capable of; or should try to do so by reading what has been written on the subject. Because published material of this nature is scarce, this pamphlet was prepared to fill this need, at least in part.

*To know what to teach* implies the ability to judge what skill and what information will best serve the child at his stage of development.

*To know how to teach* means to recognize that it makes a difference how things are presented.

*To give opportunity to learn by doing* implies giving him the freedom which is essential to his development. The three most important “freedoms” are:

1. Freedom to manipulate objects. It is obvious that the blind child needs a chance to gain knowledge of the properties of objects not merely by touching them but by manipulating them in various ways. No matter how inconvenient it may be to allow him to do so while his movements are still clumsy and his judgment is yet immature, he must not be denied this privilege.
2. Freedom to move about as much as possible. It is taken for granted that the nature of very young children requires that they must be allowed to move about freely. However, in the case of blind children, who cannot easily assert them-



selves in this respect, the importance of this need is not necessarily accepted and is sometimes overlooked.

3. Freedom to ask questions. This is a privilege which goes deeper than the other two, for it requires an even finer understanding and greater patience on the part of the parents. As the child grows older, the questions will diminish in volume and grow in significance.

You may rest assured that the fact that you encourage these "freedoms" will be appreciated by your youngster even though he is too young to analyze his feelings. You will find that the creative understanding which causes you daily to grant them to him, will build up a confident relationship between you and your child.

### *PARENTS' ATTITUDE*

In looking over this list of essentials you will realize that they are factors which have played a part in all the relationships between parents and children from time immemorial, for parents always have been teachers, though not always good ones.

#### **IMPORTANCE OF DEVOTION**

Your blind child will be more strongly affected by the quality of your devotion than other children. It makes a great difference to him whether your attitude and actions reflect consideration of his real needs or are merely prompted by pity or momentary irritations. It is reassuring to know that true affection will fully compensate for almost any passing mistakes that you may make because of lack of skill or knowledge. It is also well to keep in mind that good teachers, whether they are parents or not, have always considered character building of greater importance than the teaching of skills or the imparting of information. Though skills and knowledge are important, they should be subordinated and directed to the one end — skill in living.

#### **HARMFUL FEARS**

You probably have no doubt about the presence of affection and spiritual values in your home. But you may be one of the many parents who feel inadequate to teach, believing that a blind child must learn



and be taught through methods other than those used for sighted children. You may also be uncertain about how to give your child necessary freedom without exposing him to danger, and how to prevent him from forming an inferiority complex.

Some parents feel so helpless about the needs of a blind baby that they believe it would be better to give him institutional care from the beginning rather than "educate" him at home. Other parents, however, believing that the child will be helpless and hurt by a hostile world, want to keep him at home to protect him to the end of their days, even at the expense of his education and his freedom.

Almost all young parents who find their child is blind are shocked and confused. The shock of the discovery produces conflicting emotions, hampering their thinking. The resulting confusion is made worse by lack of knowledge. Frequently, some uncertainty regarding the seriousness of the eye condition remains during the first few years, if not throughout the entire preschool period, causing the parents to hope the child will regain at least partial sight. Some parents have been known to upset their child seriously by expectation that some miracle, medical or supernatural, might restore the sight.

This fervent wishful thinking on the part of some parents has been strengthened in recent years through their misinterpretation of newspaper articles regarding successful corneal transplants and the functions of the Eye Bank. Eye Banks are a repository for healthy eye tissue which in some cases can be used to replace damaged tissue in a living eye. A false impression is cherished by some parents; they believe that there is a possibility of transferring a normal eye from one person to another. It is only a small part of an eye which is used in cases deemed to be susceptible to such an operation; only a relatively small number are suitable for this type of surgery.

In some cases, such beliefs have made it impossible for the child to take the proper interest in his daily work and play, and have prevented organization of his inner life, producing in him confusion and unbalance.

This state of mind is found in many persons, rather than in a few. It is therefore neither an isolated nor a peculiar experience. If you should find yourself in a similar frame of



mind when this pamphlet reaches you, you should not be disturbed by your attitude. Let us talk these things over a little before we proceed to discuss what your baby needs most, and how you can give it to him.

EXAMINE  
ATTITUDES

It is natural, in fact almost inevitable, that when parents discover they have a blind baby they are not only sorrowed but shocked. It is the tendency of most of us faced with misfortune to rebel, and to wonder why it had to happen to us. To this question there can be no ready answer. Unless we want to give way to the irrational theory that life has no purpose, we must believe that our problems rightfully belong to us and that a test of character lies in the way we meet them. There may be truth and consolation, and even reason for pride, in the thought that this particular child came to you and to your home — to the parents and to the home he most needs to work out his destiny.

However this may be, it does seem indisputable that fulfillment and happiness are attainable only through determination to make the best of whatever responsibilities are clearly yours.

### *RELATIONSHIP TO THE CHILD*

In thinking about your blind baby, it is well to realize that he is first of all a definite personality with a life to live and a mission to perform. For this reason, treat him as much as possible as you would a seeing child and do not encumber him with your fears and anxieties about him. Happily, he does not share in these in his early years and probably he never will. Remember that he, like other children, will be a source of joy as well as care to you, and strive bravely to overcome your disappointment; time and energy wasted in such negative feelings impair your usefulness as a parent. Instead, always be ready to give him cheerful encouragement and to build in him the sense of your loyalty and confidence. Only in such an atmosphere is it possible for him to make proper response to the demands of life, and only thus can he harmoniously unfold his innate capabilities.



FACTS TO  
CONSIDER

At this point some definite statements may help you to think things through for yourself. Though you may want to challenge these, they will serve, nevertheless, to dispel much of this sense of confusion.

*Acceptance of the fact is essential.* It is absolutely necessary that the handicapped child, his parents, and the other members of his family "accept" the fact of his blindness with good grace.

*Role of parents is important.* Far from needing to separate yourself from your baby during his infancy for the sake of his "education," your function as parent is more important than ever.

*The handicap is serious but by no means disastrous.* A child who has never seen, suffers no sense of deprivation. You will suffer more than he will, but you will help most by taking the matter philosophically. Life, if you are willing to enjoy it, still holds much of beauty, happiness and interest for you, and your child.

*Home is the best educational environment.* Generally speaking, the best place for all children is in their own home, especially during their early years, and particularly if they face life with a handicap. What is a good home for normal children is a good home for a blind child.

*The nature of education.* Education begins in the cradle, continues through life, and is broader, deeper and richer than "academic" training, such as the three R's taught in the elementary schools.

*The education of the preschool blind child.* It is a mistake to think that highly specialized methods of education are needed during these early years. It is true that at school age the child must be taught Braille by skilled teachers, and that certain special teaching devices, like those used in schools for the blind, are very helpful. During the preschool period, however, the main task is to lay a solid foundation for good character and a balanced personality. For this, the application of general principles of child guidance are needed.



Every good mother is acquainted with these, in part, but she must realize that because a blind child needs more *conscious* guidance, she, herself, may need help from time to time with the clarification and application of her own ideas. The skills that such a child must acquire before school age can be mastered through ordinary home-teaching methods, somewhat modified to meet his needs and applied with greater patience and perseverance than are necessary in teaching other children.

*Significance of the preschool period.* The proper use of the preschool period will sharpen the child's mind and make it eager for knowledge. Improper use will dull it by neglect and stifle it by repression. This, of course, applies to all children, but more so to your blind baby because of his greater dependence upon your adult guidance.

### PROBLEMS ARISING FROM BLINDNESS

Assuming you are convinced that the principal ideas presented thus far are valid, it will now be profitable to direct your attention to more detailed problems. Before discussing these problems, we had better examine briefly the general subject of guidance and discipline, and follow this with a listing of some undesirable manifestations which may sometimes result from blindness.

**GUIDANCE AND DISCIPLINE** Realizing that children must be taught and guided and that there are right and wrong ways of doing things, let us consider the matter of guidance and discipline. By discipline we mean teaching self-restraint rather than imposing punishment.

Ordinary child guidance principles are adequate but must be more consciously applied to the blind child. (To clarify your thinking on just what is the best guidance of the preschool child, you may wish to refer to some books on the subject listed at the end of this pamphlet.)

**SPECIAL POINTERS** Some special points to be kept in mind are these:  
*Be certain* when you make a request that the child understands what is expected. Having missed some details of the total situation which caused you to make it,



he may not be clear about it, and may appear to be disobedient when actually he is confused.

*Never forget* that he is more easily frightened than others by careless words and threats. Of course, one should never make threats to any child. A calm announcement of unavoidable consequences of wrongdoing should be substituted and unfailingly carried out when occasion demands.

*Remember* that there is seldom need for scolding or punishment when children are engaged in tasks which interest them. Try to find such tasks. Let the child share as much as possible in the necessary routine of the household. Doing things together prevents friction.

*Cultivate* an attitude of not being too surprised or excited at anything that may happen, whether pleasant or unpleasant. Make it unnecessary for the child to be "bad" to attract attention. Although the blind child has even greater need of approval than others, he should have reason to feel that he is loved for what he is, rather than for what he does.

*Consider always* that the handicapped child experiences much inevitable thwarting which is a strain on his disposition. Recognition of this fact does not call for indulgence but for skillful guidance.

#### A LIST OF LIABILITIES

Although a list of liabilities is never cheerful reading, it can be useful in helping us to recognize situations that may cause trouble and in aiding us to do what we can to correct them. You will want to be on the alert for undesirable but preventable effects which sometimes result from blindness. A list of these follows:

*Passivity or over-activity.* Because blind children receive much less stimulation than youngsters with vision, some blind children tend to become passive or dull. Others, because of the nature of their eye condition, or because of over-eagerness to know what this world is like, flit from one thing to another. This retards normal development of the power of concentration, on which so much depends.



*Unwholesome attitudes of others.* Blind children usually have to deal with people who have unwholesome attitudes toward them. They have to develop their self-confidence in spite of such negative attitudes as pity, over-anxiety for their physical safety, and the fixed assumption that they must remain quite helpless throughout life — a conviction which sometimes gives rise to utter astonishment at the children's actual efficiency.

*Fear of life.* Some blind children are tempted to retreat into an imaginary world, as many adults do who find the real world harsh or uninteresting. If this tendency is not checked by inducing the child to engage in constructive activity, his chances for making a proper adjustment to life will be seriously endangered.

*Habits.* Some blind children develop mannerisms peculiar to them, called "blindisms," as well as poor carriage and posture, especially the habit of keeping the head down. Most of them must be taught to face the person to whom they are speaking.

*"Blindisms."* For some reason, never quite fully explained, blind children are apt to develop certain habitual motions, such as shaking or rolling of the body, poking the ears or eyes, shaking their hands during excitement, or — if they have some perception of light — fluttering outspread fingers in front of their eyes to see the play of light and shadow. The only explanation thus far given for "blindisms" is that any child whose attention is not constantly drawn to outer interests — a situation which is apt to be true for blind children — tends to concentrate on inner sensations, which would normally be ignored. The habit of poking or rubbing the eyes probably originates in the desire to intensify peculiar sensations which may be due to his eye condition. The habit is a common one, and is easily broken when the child finds other interests. It need not be regarded as an indication of pain. Doubt still persists as to how best to deal with these habits, but if his hands are kept occupied and the child busy and interested, he probably will not acquire them.



The following corrective suggestions are offered in this connection: Try to stop the activity silently, almost automatically, or by gentle reminder, though you cannot expect much real cooperation until your child is about three-and-a-half years old. Be careful not to nag at him at any age, else you may create stubbornness and resentment in him, which may express itself as resistance to authority. Physical restraints, such as immobilizing the arms with long cardboard cuffs — although not usually recommended — may be used. It should be kept in mind that this method runs counter to our efforts to free, rather than hamper, the already “restricted” child. The best procedure, perhaps, would be a combination of all these methods, using cardboard splints only in an extreme case where the child is in danger of injuring his eyes, and then only at times when he is most likely to indulge the habit. Splints should be removed at nap and bedtime.







## THE CHILD'S PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT AND NEEDS

### HEALTH OF THE CHILD

Except for the few points mentioned below, the health needs of the blind child are the same as those of other children. It will therefore suffice to refer you to the abundant literature available at the U. S. Children's Bureau, Washington, D. C., and other sources. A few of the most applicable pamphlets are listed at the end of this booklet. When the child's eye condition is the result of other bodily illness or deficiency, special attention must, of course, be paid to the treatment of the illness and the building up of the best possible health. It is well to keep in mind the following points: You must be sure that he is properly fed; possibly the doctor will suggest some addition to his diet which will contribute to his general condition. You must try to strike a correct balance between activity and sufficient rest. Any tendency toward passivity must be counteracted, yet you should remember that a blind child has to spend much more energy in his work and play than other children. He therefore needs more rest than they do, particularly if he shows nervous tension.

### THE PHYSICAL EFFECTS OF BLINDNESS

Although the functioning or lack of functioning of the eyes does not appear to have a direct or clearly traceable effect upon the physical growth of the child's body, some *indirect* effects may frequently be noted. These are not evident for the first three or four months. Except for making certain that he is played with and talked to often, and his position is frequently changed, you need not do anything special to train the blind baby. Later, it will become apparent that lack of vision makes it difficult for him to develop necessary activity, such as all growing children take spontaneously in response to unconscious but definite bodily demands. Such passivity, in turn, slows up the process of gaining effective control over his muscles.

LESS ACTIVE In this respect, therefore, he will be somewhat behind others and will require great patience and help from you in teaching him. In teaching him to walk, especially, you will find that it is more difficult for him to gain and maintain his balance, that he hesitates a little longer before venturing forth, and that he lacks the advantage of other children who "forget themselves" in their desire to obtain some bright object. You must then try to provide other incentives, such as attracting his attention to an object by making a pleasant sound with it, or by utilizing other things he likes, such as cookies or favorite toys.

SPECIAL HELPS Some special equipment discussed later (Taylor-Tot, Walker, Playpen, Canvas Swing) is almost essential. Some of these devices are important chiefly because they continue a movement started by the child, thus giving him both a sense of mastery and a sense of greater freedom than he feels when he is merely pushing his body along. Moving rhythmically to music or song also provides this sense of freedom, and should, therefore, be encouraged.

If there is a yard, some simple and, if need be, home-made equipment — such as is used in nursery schools — should be employed at an early age. While indoors, ordinary stairs, a crossbar, and a swing in a doorway, can be used to advantage. You will be surprised at the control some of these children gain over their bodies, a control that often enables them to surpass their seeing playmates in these gymnastic exercises. What your youngster needs most is encouragement and self-reliance, which you can help him to gain by overcoming, or at least controlling, your own fears for him. In fact, by placing confidence in him and allowing him to develop his own methods of caution, he will in time learn to walk very well, to go up and down stairs and about the immediate neighborhood, and he *will be safer* and more dependable in doing so than he could ever be if he were constantly checked or excessively watched over.

POSTURE OF THE CHILD Earlier it was mentioned that among the things you should be alert to is the tendency to develop poor posture, such as the habit of keeping the head down. In children whose eyes are sensitive to light, this habit



is formed to avoid the irritation it causes. In such cases it is well to consult an oculist to learn if he approves the wearing of dark glasses. Totally blind children, however, may form this habit simply because they have no reason for raising the head, nor any idea of how they appear to others. This tendency may be counteracted by giving your child exercises, such as having him carry books on his head while walking (making a game of it in which other people participate), and by letting him get "the feel" of what it means to carry oneself well by placing him against a wall with the heels and the back of the head touching it.

A tendency to flatfootedness has also been noted. This may possibly be explained by the inclination of blind children, who cannot see where they are going, to reach out with their feet, or by the fact that vision plays a much more dominant role than is generally realized in gaining and maintaining correct posture and balance. Toeing out is a known cause of flatfootedness, as this posture throws the weight of the body on the part of the foot least able to support it, thus tending to break down the arches. Running and jumping, with special attention to getting up on the toes, has been recommended as a preventive of flatfootedness.\* Walking on a plank, which forces the placing of the feet in a straight line, Indian fashion, will also do much to correct this.

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\* Harriet E. Totman, *What Shall We Do with Our Blind Babies?*





## THE CHILD'S EMOTIONAL AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

We are aware that a change takes place in the child's emotional life as time passes. We expect an older child to be able to take in his stride certain experiences which at an earlier age used to upset him. Yet the change we expect does not take place in the intensity of the child's *feelings* but in his understanding and insight, which results in an extension of his ability to share in other people's lives. It has, for example, been surmised correctly that a small child may feel just as intensely about a broken doll as an adult might about the loss of a loved one.

When we speak of a person as being "emotionally immature" we mean that he is, or seems to be, too self-centered to cope with life; and when an older child is upset over something that the adult considers trifling, we hear the admonition: "Don't act like a baby."

A baby's world seems to be entirely encompassed by self. Later, he takes an interest in those who bring him comfort, and gradually, as he grows through childhood and adolescence into adulthood, he enters into sympathetic relationships with other members of the family, with schoolmates, teachers, and even strangers. Eventually, if this development proceeds normally, he will be capable of extending his sympathy even to persons he does not like, and of accepting painful experiences philosophically; that is, without too great a feeling of personal hurt.

That this is the direction in which such development proceeds is clearly illustrated by the fact that a two-year-old will take little or no interest in other children; he will continue his solitary play in the midst of them, as may be observed in a nursery school. Because all two-year-old children act this way, we conclude that this is a normal "level of social and emotional maturity" for children of that age. If a five-year-old behaves in this manner, however, everyone knows that something is amiss.

### BLIND CHILD'S DIFFICULTIES

The blind child encounters much greater difficulty in this process and must be understood and helped. Like others, he must learn to take

and to share responsibility. It is not easy for him to establish a satisfying relationship with other children, for he cannot quite compete with them on an equal basis. When they take his toys, he cannot retrieve them easily; and other children are likely at some time to take advantage of this, and of the fact that he cannot, as well as they, defend himself by physical force. These certainly are times "when a feller needs a friend," and it is not easy to be the true and wise friend he needs. It will not do always to interfere in this group play, to "make a baby of him" by constantly taking his part, nor will it be possible in all neighborhoods to start an "educational campaign" in his behalf. It is sometimes possible, however, to discuss some special occurrence and to interpret your problem to some of the neighbors and thus gain their understanding and cooperation. In this situation, as in all others, it is necessary to see things as they are, and you may count on it that *your* attitude is contagious whether it be a sound and healthy one or just the opposite.

As contact with life is necessary for emotional and social growth, it is obvious that by over-protecting a child we are doing him a disservice. One's self-respect, self-assurance and poise, so necessary if one is to meet life successfully, are based on an inner sense of security which consists of the knowledge that one is loved and respected and a sense of personal achievement. We must make it possible for the child to obtain both.

#### EMOTIONAL AND SOCIAL NEEDS

Some general suggestions relating to the blind child's emotional and social needs may be of help to you.

*Self-amusement.* Very early, encourage the child to occupy himself alone. Change his environment, his position, and his toys when his interest flags, but do not feel that you must constantly amuse him. Continue training for self-amusement, meanwhile giving him a sense of security by letting him know that you are near.

*Importance of voice.* Remember that your baby misses all that is conveyed by means of gesture, bodily posture, facial expression and general pantomime. Be careful, therefore, that your voice does not inadvertently take on a harsh tone towards him or others.



*Playmates.* Try to attract playmates to him by encouraging them, by taking an interest in their affairs, and by such means as little entertainments or excursions. As few parents take the trouble to do these things, you are giving him a little advantage over the others. Play equipment in the yard serves the same purpose. We have seen how well blind children will respond to the chance of a little distinction, be it only that of learning Braille while others do not, of going in a taxi to a sight-saving class, or by playing Sunday School hymns by ear for the class.

*School.* Send him to a public kindergarten or nursery school and to Sunday school or its equivalent when this is possible. It is well to start plans for his acceptance as early as possible by visiting the local principal and telling him and the teacher of your child's needs. School authorities are likely to be unaware that, under certain conditions, a blind child at this age can be successfully fitted into their school routine. Whenever the school experience of a blind child among the seeing has been a happy and rewarding one, this success has always been due to the personal approach beforehand and to the cooperation of parents, workers and teachers during the period of the child's attendance. The Preschool Consultant from the Commission for the Blind will be happy to assist in such preliminary arrangements and to give help to teachers as well as to keep your child under supervision after entrance to a nursery or kindergarten.

*Personality.* Encourage in your child a pleasant personality and see to it that he makes a good appearance so that he does not unnecessarily prejudice people against him. It is, of course, understood that you want the child to strive for that inner development of which these things are a natural expression.

*Poise.* Hardly ever do things for him you know he has learned to do for himself. Be on the alert to find things for him to do which will build in him a sense of achievement. Calmly expect that he will do them. Remind him occasionally, when necessary, of his ability; this will give him poise and will spare him needless embarrassment.

*Prepare him.* When you are planning to take him on some errand, whether to a friend's house, a store, or any other place, talk to him a little about what he may expect to find there. When you expect guests, make some little suggestion which will make it easier for him to meet them. You might suggest, for example: "Miss So-and-So will like to see your new tricycle and how well you ride it, or the basket you made, or those pussy-willows we found."

*"See" for him.* If together in a strange place, give him, with a few words, some idea of whether there are other people in the room besides the person you are talking to, let him "see" some object in which he may be interested. In any case, do not leave him for any length of time with nothing better to do than to listen to the talk of grown-ups.

**CHILD CAN  
BE HAPPY**

When we get to know blind adults or read autobiographical books by blind authors, we are likely to be amazed at their achievements. Nevertheless, we also realize that a blind person has to endure many situations which would be humiliating to any person but one who has learned not to blame himself unjustly, or to give too much weight to what people might think. This is true to some extent for the child; yet do not think that the inner experience of newly blinded adults is comparable to that of your baby who has never seen. *This is not, and cannot be, the case.* In a proper home, a blind child is likely to be a happy child who makes his adjustments to life so gradually, taking things as they come, that he does not suffer any great sense of deprivation.

### *THE CHILD'S PLACE IN THE FAMILY*

The relationship between a blind child and his brothers and sisters depends very much on their respective ages.

Usually, if a blind child is the oldest by several years, few problems arise, for the younger children are likely to accept matters as they are, without too much questioning. This is true especially if the blind child has already mastered his basic skills, such as walking, speaking, toileting, and self-feeding, before the little ones "begin to notice."



If the difference in ages is too small to bring about this situation, there will be a few difficult years ahead, when the younger child cannot be a companion to the older one, and each is likely to be in the other's way in matters of locomotion and playing. It would be best in this case to keep the babies somewhat apart from each other.

If the order is reversed, and the blind child is several years younger than the other children, usually things work out very nicely if the handicap of blindness is explained or interpreted to the older children according to their understanding.

The basic need is to bring the older children to a realization that their little brother is like them in all respects, except in the ability to see. They should be told that he, like them, wants to do things for himself and wants to be helped only when he really needs to be. The older children may be taught to observe that they themselves are really in the same situation with respect to things they are not yet able to do or understand.

The presence of the blind child, calling as it does for some thoughtfulness on the part of all, can be made a source of fine character building. Some teachers who have had a blind or otherwise handicapped child in their classroom with seeing children have, for this reason, considered their presence an asset.





## THE CHILD'S MENTAL DEVELOPMENT AND NEEDS

In considering what we mean by "mental life," we find it is made up of the ability to reason, to make comparisons, and to draw conclusions. We work with ideas and concepts built up from sense impressions and from what is conveyed to us by the spoken or written word. To put it concisely, thinking proceeds largely by means of reflecting about impressions conveyed by the senses.

The blind child, therefore, must obtain the information so necessary to enable him to function in this world by using his other senses to the limit, and by relying a great deal on memory. Remember that he must construct his world "piecemeal" for he is not able — as we are, by a mere glance — to obtain a wealth of information simultaneously, such as the size, shape, color and relative position of objects and the intervening space between them.

The following suggestions will help you to stimulate his mental life:

Give him as many first-hand experiences as possible.

Encourage questions and answer them patiently.

Build new concepts in his mind correctly by comparing the new thing with something he already knows.

Encourage the use of *all* his senses in obtaining information and let him manipulate objects as much as possible.

Make him acquainted with live specimens of small animals and give him some stuffed animals to learn about. Small replicas of large objects and of large animals are very useful.

### USE OF MODELS

There has been some controversy among educators concerning the value of models, some educators contending their use might be worse than useless to a blind child because their resemblance to originals is often very slight. Usually models represent only a few of the characteristics of the originals and differ from them in such important aspects as size, shape, color, texture, smell and sound.

While this is true, and some toys — such as wooden cut-outs of animals — may actually be confusing to the blind child, models in general are valuable as a starting point for discussion. Only by means of the elaboration of an idea through comparison with something one already knows, supplemented by further description, can anyone hope to build correct concepts.

#### WORDS, SPEECH AND LANGUAGE

Words, speech and language are the tools of the mind. Words represent objects and qualities and are therefore symbols. A symbol has no meaning to us if it does not represent something we know by experience. A blind child may take part in conversation and use the same words you do, yet show that he has an entirely wrong concept about the subject or some of its aspects. We must be on the alert to help him to form correct concepts.

#### LEARNING TO SPEAK

Blind children are likely to be a bit late in learning to talk, and they have difficulty with correct pronunciation. This is largely because they have to learn to imitate the proper sound entirely by ear, not being able to see the position of the lips of the speaker.

The following pointers will help you in this connection:

Begin to play with your voice, or use something that makes a pleasant sound to attract his attention, and let him imitate you.

Give him the name of the toy or object that he is handling. Use words to describe his sensations such as “hot,” “wet,” and so forth.

Talk directly and frequently *to* your baby; converse *with* him. This will teach him words and self-expression.

Do not keep the radio going incessantly; this scatters the child’s attention and establishes passive habits of mind.

He should listen and participate in conversation in the family group. He should not be diverted by continuous sounds from a machine, particularly because some children are late in learning the use of words except when they want something.



He must be encouraged to use speech in conversation. Some blind children are very late in taking part in conversations. They do not seem to be aware that response is called for and that questions should be answered. Nursery rhymes are a great joy and of much value to them, as is reading aloud from children's books and story-telling.

ORDERLINESS  
AND PLANNING

Orderliness and planning have important bearing upon the efficiency of the child's mind, yet are seldom accorded the attention they deserve.

Picture to yourself how you would manage, without taking notes, and with your eyes closed, to find an object the least bit mislaid. You will then readily realize that the habit of orderliness must relieve the blind person of a great deal of unnecessary worry. By inculcating this habit early in your child, you are rendering him a great service. He should be encouraged to do some planning himself whenever the opportunity arises. It will be obvious to you that he can develop a *habit* of orderliness and planning only in an environment which is stabilized by well-established routine.

Let him take pride in returning things to their places. Give him a place of his own for his toys and clothing. Put up low hooks or hangers in the bathroom for his towels, washcloth and toothbrush; and make some arrangement elsewhere for his closet and drawer and closet space, so that he can put away his clothes himself. At night let him place his clothes in the order in which he will put them on the next morning, turned right side out and placed the way it would be easiest for him to get into them.





## *THE CHILD'S SPIRITUAL LIFE*

It will be evident from what has already been said that the spiritual life is of utmost importance. The broad sense in which the term is here used has also been indicated. Religious faith gives a child moral support such as cannot be had through other means. As a child's first trust is in his parents, who appear all-wise and all-powerful to him, it is important that the parents make themselves worthy of this trust, and gradually lead the child to see that they, in turn, look to divine help and guidance.

## *THE PLACE OF MUSIC AND LITERATURE*

Music and literature may have a tremendous influence in the life of a child. Within them lies the power to satisfy a child's thirst for knowledge; to expand his human sympathy with, and understanding of, people and all living creatures; to stimulate his imagination and make him sensitive to beauty.

The short list of children's books suggested at the end of this pamphlet will help you to make your selections. It concentrates on books for younger children. Good books, written for the younger ones, are more difficult to find. As the publication of books is rapidly changing, this list cannot include the latest issues, but it indicates the kinds of books that are recommended. Books of collected stories are chosen to meet the needs of parents who have little opportunity, time or money, to go extensively into the subject. The collections mentioned cover a wide range of subjects as well as the entire preschool period. Books relying on other senses than those of sight are recommended as having a special appeal to blind children.

No books have been mentioned for children who have some vision. By all means, though, select some books for them with clear pictures without a confusing background. You will find that even the totally blind child appreciates the possession of a picture or other kind of book. In his case you will, of course, be all the more eager to delight him by reading or telling him the stories in the collections. The happy memories of the shared joys of reading, singing, and playing together will stay with your

children throughout life and constitute for them a source of comfort and strength.

In thinking about music, divest yourself of the notion so prevalent today that both music and literature are things set apart from life and are meant to be "practiced" only by specialists and to be enjoyed only passively by laymen. In addition, discard any feeling you may have that you cannot "carry a tune" and are not musical yourself. If you feel out of touch with these fascinating worlds, this is a splendid time to make up for what you have lost; not necessarily by undertaking some ambitious plan but by re-discovering for yourself, on the simplest terms, the treasures they contain, as you open the doors to them for your child. Do not neglect to read the introductions to the books of collected stories and to the music books, for they will lead you straight into the child's inner world.

### Recordings

When this booklet was originally written, consideration of children's records was purposely postponed because the records at that time were of very poor quality. Since then some imaginative experimentation has resulted in great improvements. However, mass production has unloaded poor recordings on the public. It is advisable, therefore, to hear records before buying, or to seek some competent advice before making your selection. The few recordings listed here were recommended to us by Mrs. Emma Dickson Sheehy, Assistant Professor of Education, Teachers College, Columbia University, who currently reports her findings on recordings in *Parents' Magazine*. Many of the classic fairy tales have been recorded but, as in the case of books, the great variety in the quality of their presentation requires discrimination in choosing. Some of the best recordings for the preschool child are made by the Young People's Record Club. See lists at end of pamphlet.



## WHAT TO EXPECT OF YOUR CHILD

Our general over-all picture of the blind child's life has now been completed. However, we have not yet presented much of an idea of what to expect of a normal blind child at a given age. Below you will find some minimum standards of achievement. These were selected from a Social Maturity Scale\* adapted to the preschool blind child and based on a study of 100 blind, presumably normal, children. They give a fairly accurate indication of what may be expected. You need not take it too seriously, as it has not yet been sufficiently tested, though it may prove generally helpful as a checking device.\*\*

The skills are listed here, as in the original scale, in the order of their appearance in life, and the ones mentioned last are those the child should achieve by the end of the year under discussion. Acquisition of skill depends upon exercise, and we cannot expect a child to develop a skill he never had an opportunity to practice.

The suggestions following these items were placed there because of their pertinence to that particular age. They do not form part of the original scale, nor do the suggestions which refer to play materials. With regard to the latter, it must be kept in mind that toys are *very helpful* to the child and that some such "equipment" is essential, for toys are really tools. If you cannot afford many, you should choose carefully; with some imagination you will probably find many things in your home which could be set aside as toy substitutes, such as are mentioned below.

### STANDARDS FOR NORMAL BLIND CHILDREN

What follows is a listing of standards of achievement for normal blind children and suggestions for training and for equipment.

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\* "Tenative Adaptation of the Vineland Social Maturity Scale for Use with Visually Handicapped Preschool Children" (from Maxfield & Fjeld, *Child Development*. Vol. 13, No. 1, March, 1942). Adapted from *Vineland Social Maturity Scale*. (Doll) 1936.

\*\* For a recent report on mental testing of blind children of preschool age, see article by Samuel P. Hayes, Ph.D., and the discussion which follows it, both in the book entitled: "The Blind Preschool Child," listed in the bibliography at the end of this pamphlet.

During the First Year.

He should be able to:

Sit unsupported for several minutes.

Pull himself to a standing position and lower himself to a sitting one.

Imitate sounds.

Drink from a cup or glass, helping to hold it.

Stand alone, and walk forward when held by both hands.

Perform simple pantomime like pat-a-cake.

Hand over a toy on request.

*Suggestions for First Year.* Do not confine the baby too long to one position, as in a crib, chair, swing, playpen, or other confining space. When he creeps, let him move about freely while you are near. (Blind children often do not creep.)

A helpful method of teaching him to take his first steps alone is to have two adults sitting opposite each other, with a little walking space between them. Encourage the child to "run" alternately into the arms of one or the other, the adults meanwhile very gradually increasing the distance between them.

Urge him to eat crackers or similar food from his own hand, and place his hand on the glass when you are feeding him.

Encourage vocal play, to get him to imitate sounds.

Let him help in dressing by extending his arms and legs into clothing.

Nursery equipment and playthings may include the following: Rattles, spools, wrist-bells, or anything which makes a pleasing sound (sew bells on cuddly toys); high-chair, baby-pen, walker, Taylor-Tot, canvas swing, rocking-horse, and so forth; rubber squeaking toys, rubber blocks with bells inside, spoon and tin cup; all kinds of cans and boxes, with and without hinges; and such things as clothespins and large buttons.

During the Second Year.

He should be able to:

Fetch familiar objects.



Use a basket or other receptacle for carrying small objects from place to place.

Handle cup or glass well and replace it on the table.

Eat with a spoon.

Walk about freely. (Some children walk up stairs.)

Indicate needs or desires through the use of language and gesture.

Use names of familiar objects.

Talk in phrases. Enjoy being with other children, even though he does not actually play with them.

*Suggestions for Second Year.* Self-feeding: Let him hold the spoon during part of the meal, in the beginning gently guiding his arm or hand. A baby spoon with a straight handle is helpful at first. Do not expect too much, and do not mind spilling of food. Patient persistence will save the day; nothing is gained and much may be lost by impatience. Give him a plate with a standing brim with partitions, if possible, or a bowl. Do not allow him to use the food or utensils as playthings, and do not divert his attention from "the business in hand."

In general, it is advisable to get the child's meal out of the way before the family sits down to dinner. It is also helpful to let him get used to eating from his own little table and chair when he has "graduated" from the high-chair.

Toilet-training: Take the matter of toilet-training without undue concern. If you consider it important that the habit of keeping dry should be thoroughly established at not too late a date, you will have to give it as much attention as you would any task which requires time, effort and patience.

From what has already been said, it will be clear that the attainment of full independence in this matter is a complicated achievement for the child as it involves the mastery of many subsidiary skills. The usual methods advised for training seeing children are valid, but when to begin is somewhat difficult to determine. In general, begin some four months or so later than with other children. If, by that time, he is not yet walking alone

but seems "ready" in other ways, it is well to start positive training to the extent of teaching him to tell you of his needs. Postponement of such training might cause the child to become habituated to a negative habit of irresponsibility or negligence regarding this matter.

The best procedure is to try to keep him dry from the beginning. In the case of some children this means placing him on his potty-chair at half- or three-quarter-hour intervals. Whether the desired result justifies the frequent handling this method requires, and the parent's almost constant preoccupation with the problem, is open to question.

It is frequently possible, by studying the child's rhythm, to keep him reasonably dry, and by making less frequent trips to the chair you are more likely to gain the child's cooperation. Praise should be given for effort to cooperate, and the child must never be made to feel guilty for failure.

In order to be able to keep dry at night, most children need to be picked up late in the evening, and sometimes restriction of fluids for a few hours before retiring is recommended.

Everything should be done to simplify matters, such as providing a convenient and never-varying place for his facilities, if they are movable; a box or small steps to enable him to use the adult's toilet, if a Toidy seat is used; and suitable clothing, such as training pants first and two-piece suits with elastic bands and zippered clothing (or with large buttons and button-holes) later.

Equipment and play materials: Some toilet arrangement enabling him to learn to help himself; clothing as already mentioned.

As for toys: Pegboard with large pegs, interlocking trains, cars, trucks, large ball, pushcart or pull toy, pots and pans with covers, pocketbook, xylophone, toy piano, music-box, sand toys, and a nursery table with one or two chairs.

#### During the Third Year.

He should be able to:

Remove coat or simple garment; put on, with some help

Dry his own hands.

Ask to go to toilet, and help with panties.



Put pegs in large pegboard without help.

Listen attentively to a simple story which has repetition and familiar characters.

Use pronouns "I", "Me", "You", plural forms and past tense.

*Suggestions for Third Year.* This is a good time to start a routine way of doing things. The child of this age likes it that way, and he also likes to find things in accustomed places. We may begin teaching orderliness, taking care not to press the matter. It is also a good time to let him help with certain little household tasks, such as bringing in papers or bottles of milk; bringing father his slippers; helping to put groceries away, and in running simple errands indoors or to the next-door neighbor. He should be taught to wash his face and hands by showing him the necessary motions. Tell him stories about activities at home and stories giving information about nature, animals and people, being careful that he gets correct concepts.

Play materials and equipment: Clay, blocks of all sizes, simplest wooden puzzles, large wooden beads to string, transportation and housekeeping toys, dolls, toy furniture and tricycle.

The low stool or crate, used to reach the toilet, will also enable him to reach the adult's washbasin. Provide a low rod and hooks for his towel and washcloth.

#### *During the Fourth Year.*

He should be able to:

Jump with both feet from a low box or from bottom steps.

Walk downstairs, one step per tread.

Unbutton front and side buttons, if not too small.

Button front and side buttons.

Make recognizable mud pies or cakes.

*Suggestions for Fourth Year.* If you have not as yet taken some definite steps to bring some playmates into his life, this is the time to begin, as it is a good time for nursery or Sunday school attendance. Do not delay any longer in providing some simple equipment for the yard, such as perhaps some large crates,

some planks, or a swing, if you cannot afford more elaborate things. By this time he should have learned just how far he is allowed to go out-of-doors alone — and that he must not cross the street alone. He is now capable of some work at his little table. Stringing of buttons or beads, some cutting and pasting, some work with clay or fingerpaint, and building with fairly large blocks, will train his hands and fingers. Sharing housework with you with toy equipment of good quality is very helpful. This is the time of interest in silly language, and all can have lots of fun by reading Edward Lear's *Nonsense ABC*.

Play equipment: Garden tools, doll clothes with large buttons and buttonholes, and perhaps blackboard and chalk for a child with some vision.

*During the Fifth Year.*

He should be able to:

Care for himself at the toilet.

Wash his face unassisted.

Go about immediate neighborhood unattended, if this does not involve crossing of streets.

Dress himself, except tying strings.

Dramatize songs or stories.

Skip or hop on one foot.

*Suggestions for Fifth Year.* Encourage him to make something with his hands and to finish what he has started. Nothing is more stabilizing than *work*. It helps us to direct our energies, to maintain balance, and to solidify our character.

The blind child needs help in keeping himself constructively occupied and in getting the satisfaction and self-confidence which come only through success. Hence the suggestion that we find opportunities for him to make something acceptable enough to be given away as a present, and to hold him responsible for the performance of some little household duties such as were mentioned previously.

It is not easy to find handicraft material for a blind child of this age, for he is likely to be a bit retarded in the development



of the motor control and coordination necessary for this work. This is all the more reason for interesting him in it by patient teaching, without causing undue strain.

The most likely possibilities are: Stringing of large beads and popcorn; very coarse weaving, such as the making of potholders with "loopers" and tablemats with coarse thread, Dennison crepe paper or raffia; basketry with the same kind of material; modeling simple objects in clay, such as marbles or a small vase, made by depressing the center of a ball; and painting with water-color or fingerpaints, either just for the joy of making paintings or to decorate a sheet of paper which might be used as wrapping paper, a bookcover, or put to any other use imagination suggests. Although blocks are also excellent creative material, it must be said that in general blind children show little spontaneous interest in them, presumably because concepts of architecture are lacking. For this very reason, however, they are useful in developing these concepts at the age of five years and after.

He will probably now want to go to school, and will need the wider experience outside of his own home.

Play equipment: Roller skates, log cabin blocks, books and (for children with some vision) easel with easel paper, and waterpaints (with a brush at least one-half inch wide), and a blackboard. A real piano should be accessible, if at all possible, and simple musical instruments like a toy piano, xylophone, bells, ocarina, flute (such as the "recorder")\*, mouth harmonica, triangle and tambourine; and percussion instruments, such as a drum or rattles made from gourds, are very desirable. Some of these instruments, particularly those for percussion, are also suitable at an earlier age.

#### During the Sixth Year.

He should be able to:

Use skates, sled and wagon.

Leave home for school or other destination without undue difficulty in parting.

Be interested in projects that carry over from day to day.

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\* The "recorder" is a simple wooden flute—a real instrument—more expensive than the toy tin flute.

Ask questions about the meaning of words and how things work.

Tell a fairly long story accurately.

Adjust to modern kindergarten regulations.

*Suggestions for Sixth Year.* Play equipment: Much like that suggested for the five-year-old, with the addition of tinker toys and special dominoes designed for blind players, though only some children will be ready for these.

We have now come in our discussion to the end of the pre-school period and your youngster is presumably ready for school. The emphasis upon preparation for life throughout this pamphlet should not have obscured the fact that the child's life, like the adult's, is important in itself, at whatever stage he happens to be. To quote Professor Dewey: "Because the need of preparation for a continually developing life is great, it is imperative that every energy should be bent to making the present experience as rich and significant as possible. Then, as the present merges insensibly into the future, the future is taken care of."\*

### FORMAL EDUCATION

Your child is now ready to begin his more formal education. If he is a resident of New York City, or Buffalo, you have a choice of entering him in a Braille or sight-saving class in the public schools or in one of three residential schools for the blind. The decision regarding the proper method of education — whether by means of the sight-saving system or the Braille system — depends upon the actual amount of vision which your child has. The choice between a residential school or special classes in the public schools will rest upon other considerations. Two of the residential schools are located in New York City. The State School for the Blind is located at Batavia, New York. There are some 22 sight-saving classes in public schools scattered throughout the State but at this writing only one of these classes accepts pupils who need to use Braille for their studies.

#### Sight-Saving Classes

If a child at school age has enough vision to profit from sight-saving education where large type books are used, this form of

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\* John Dewey, *Democracy and Education*.



instruction is usually advised. It is felt that the alphabet as used by seeing pupils tends to keep the child in a group of seeing classmates. It may be worthwhile, however, to consider this: later in life, as an adult, the child will find very few books printed in large type. Consequently, for certain uses, proficiency in Braille may be desirable, if not indispensable.

### Braille Classes

In these classes, all instruction is carried on by the use of Braille. Pupils have the advantage of being able to live at home and to participate in many general activities with their sighted schoolmates even though their school work is carried on in a special classroom.

### Residential versus Local Schools

For residents of the above-named large cities who are able to choose between the residential school and special classes in local schools, the following comparison of the advantages of each may be of value. Individual circumstances in each case are likely to tip the scales in favor of one or the other.

#### Residential Schools

Schools are staffed with experienced personnel.

Schools have the latest special equipment, often too expensive for a local school to purchase.

Schools are equipped to give special vocational training.

Pupils enter into the life of the community as much as possible.

The child is more likely to feel himself on an equal footing with others.

A child whose home has been emotionally or otherwise disturbed may feel that the school is a haven of security.

Because of closer companionship of the pupils, friendships made in the school are likely to last throughout life.

Contact with parents and the home is maintained and encouraged.

#### Local Classes

Make possible residence at home (transportation arranged) and participation in school and community programs as a family

group. This makes a child's adjustment to the seeing world more normal.

#### ENTRANCE INTO A SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND

Naturally, you will probably not be able to think without some reluctance of the necessary separation that departure to school will bring; nor will the child who is happy at home want to leave. To an adult, wishing to prepare the child as well as possible for life, however, the painful thought of separation is mixed with a sense of gratitude that a good education can be had. The blind child's outlook would indeed be dismal without such an opportunity.

If you will approach this new experience in the spirit of adventure, the child will readily fall in line and, in spite of periods of homesickness, willingly accept the separation for the sake of his education. Most children respond very well to the environment provided by the schools for the blind where their special needs are understood and where they will neither be over-indulged nor expected to comply with unreasonable demands. Your child still needs you, of course, and it will be most helpful to him if you will enter into an actively cooperative relationship with the teachers and matrons of the school.

It would be particularly helpful to the child if you were to learn the writing of Braille, so that you may enter into intimate correspondence with him which excludes the intervention of a third person. This interest on your part will also greatly stimulate the child in his own efforts to master both Braille reading and writing. The latter skill is easily learned by a seeing person. It is only needed for your intimate messages to him, and in a few years he will learn to use an ordinary typewriter in writing to you.

While he is at school is a good time for you to acquaint yourself with the resources in the field of the blind by reading informative books on the subject. Parents of children living in New York State may borrow from the Traveling Libraries Section of the New York State Library in Albany, which maintains a list of preschool titles. These books largely concern themselves with the guidance of the normal child of preschool age, though some titles dealing with the psychological and social aspects of blindness are also available.



Children are accepted in the kindergarten of residential schools for the blind at the age of five years. In recent years, the two schools located in New York City have accepted even younger children. The New York Institute for the Education of the Blind maintains a nursery school program, while the Lavelle School accommodates these small children in their kindergarten. Although both schools prefer to have pupils return to their homes for week-ends and vacations, the advisability of institutionalizing so small a child is open to question.

Some children in New York State enter public kindergarten first and schools for the blind at the age of six. To postpone the entrance of a child into the latter until he is older is seldom beneficial and often harmful, because at this age his mental powers are ready for expansion and crave definite work to do. As his playmates are now in school, it is much better to let him talk of, and plan for, going to school also. Delay is likely to cause unnecessary brooding on the part of the blind child.

Since by this time he is aware of his blindness, we can tell him that it is necessary for him to go to a school where he will be taught to read with his fingers, as he cannot see well enough to read the way other children do.

With a hopeful and matter-of-fact attitude on your part, he will look forward to this new experience.

Now your child has developed and progressed into the age group where, perhaps for the first time, he will have to meet real competition largely "on his own." If, as a precious parting gift from his parents, he takes into this wider world a real sense of security derived from your wise and devoted guidance and training during his early years, you will certainly feel that life does truly reward genuine effort. The child, meanwhile, will face life with a conviction that, "even for him," it holds much that is infinitely interesting, beautiful and precious.

## SUGGESTED BOOKS

### CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

#### Inexpensive Good Books

##### *Golden Book Series*

(covering all subjects)

Different Authors

Simon & Schuster, 25¢

Available at drug stores, "5 and 10¢" stores, etc.

#### Books of Collected Stories

##### *Here and Now Story Book*

Mitchell, Lucy S.

Dutton Co., \$2.00 each

For children from 2-8 years

##### *Told under the Green Umbrella*

Folk and fairy tales

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##### *The Mr. Small Series*

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Lenski, Lois

Oxford Univ. Press, 75¢ to \$1.00

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##### *Rain Drop Splash*

Trisselt, Alvin

Lathrop Lee & Shepard, \$1.75

##### *The Little Engine that Could*

Piper, Watty

Platt & Monk, 60¢

##### *This is the Milk that Jack Drank*

##### *This is the Bread that Betsy Ate*

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##### *Everybody Eats*

Green, Mary McBurney

Wm. R. Scott, Inc., \$1.00

##### *The Friendly Animals*

Slobodkan, Louis

Vanguard Press, Inc., \$1.75

#### Poetry

##### *James Tippetts Series*

I Live in a City

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I know Some Little Animals

Harper Bros., from 75¢ to \$1.00

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Stevenson, Robert L.

Harper Bros., \$2.00

### MUSIC BOOKS FOR THE PRESCHOOL CHILD

##### *Singing with Peter and Patsy*

Boesel, Ann S.

Oxford University Press, \$2.00

Little songs about doing things, such as dressing and lacing one's shoes. Another section about outdoors and animals, and about special days such as Hallowe'en, etc.

##### *Favorite Nursery Songs*

Random House, 50¢

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### *Sentence Songs*

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### *Singing Games for Children*

Guessford, Margaret G.

Willis Muir Co., Cincinnati, Ohio, \$1.25

Traditional Games, such as "Farmer in the Dell," "London Bridge," "The Mulberry Bush," etc.

### Publisher's Addresses

Harper Bros., 49 East 33rd St., N. Y. C.

Lothrop Lee & Shepard, 419 Fourth Ave., N. Y. C.

Oxford Univ. Press, 114 Fifth Ave., N. Y. C.

Platt & Monk, 200 Fifth Ave., N. Y. C.

Rand McNally & Co., 111 Eighth Ave., N. Y. C.

Scott, Wm. R., Inc., 513 Sixth Ave., N. Y. C.

Simon & Schuster, 1230 Sixth Ave., N. Y. C.

Vanguard Press, Inc., 242 Madison Ave., N. Y. C.

### RECORDINGS

*But Muffin Could Hear\**

*Muffin in The City\**

*Little Brass Band\**

*Let's All Join\*\**

Young People's Record Club, 40 West 46th Street, New York City

*Mother Goose Parade\**

(Metro Goldwyn Mayer)

*Goldilocks and Three Bears\**

(Musicraft)

*Happy Harmonica\*\*\**

(Victor)

### PAMPHLETS AND ARTICLES ON THE BLIND

(for parents)

*The Blind Child and His World in What of the Blind*, Vol. 2

Lowenfeld, Berthold, Ph.D.

American Foundation for the Blind

*The Blind Preschool Child*

Lowenfeld, Berthold, Ph.D., Editor

American Foundation for the Blind

*A Manual for Parents of Preschool Blind Children*

Speer, Edith L.

New York Association for the Blind

What Shall we do with our Blind Babies? *Outlook for the Blind*

Vol. 27, 1933, pp. 52-60

Totman, Harriet E.

American Foundation for the Blind

Playthings for Blind Babies

from *Outlook for the Blind*

December, 1942

Totman, Harriet E.

American Foundation for the Blind

A Service for Blind Children of Preschool Age, *Outlook for the Blind*,

Vol. 39, No. 1, January 1945

Van den Broek, Gertrude\*\*\*\*

For a further list of available material, write to Miss Helga Lende, Librarian, American Foundation for the Blind, 15 West 16th Street, New York 11, N. Y.

### BOOKS ON GUIDANCE OF THE PRESCHOOL CHILD

*Infant Care*

U. S. Dept. of Labor, 15¢, revised 1945

Children's Bureau Publication No. 8

*Babies are Human Beings*

Aldrich, Dr. Anderson C. and Mary M.

The Macmillan Co., 1938, \$2.25

*The Child from One to Six*

His care and training

U. S. Dept. of Labor, 15¢ revised 1945

Children's Bureau Publication No. 30

A pediatrician and his wife discuss the development and care of babies with wisdom and a rare feeling for their human needs.

\* Suitable for 3 years of age and over.

\*\* Suitable for 4 years of age and over.

\*\*\* Suitable for 5 years of age and over.

\*\*\*\* Reprints obtainable from State Commission for the Blind, 205 East 42nd Street, New York 17, N. Y.

*The Parents' Manual: A Guide to the Emotional Development of Young Children*

Wolf, Anna W. M.

Simon and Schuster, 1941, \$2.50

The management of children discussed in warm human terms, to help parents understand themselves and their children and the deeper needs behind everyday behavior.

*Your Child's Development and Guidance Told in Pictures*

Meek, Lois H.

J. B. Lippincott Co., \$2.00

A graphic and attractive presentation of the main development from birth to approximately 6 years of age.

*Infant and Child in the Culture of Today*

Gesell, Arnold and others.

Harper & Bros., \$4.00

Distinguished from all other writings by its unique delineation of the characteristic personality changes accompanying growth.

*When Children Ask About Sex*

Staff of the Child Study Assn. of America, 1943, 20¢

A brief pamphlet designed to help parents in answering children's questions and fostering sound attitudes toward sex.

*Discipline: What Is It?*

Burgess, Helen Steers

Child Study Assn. of America, 15¢

*What Makes a Good Home?*

Staff of the Child Study Assn. of America, 1944, 15¢

*What Makes Good Habits: The Beginnings of Discipline*

Staff of the Child Study Assn. of America, 1944, 15¢

*The Wise Choice of Toys*

Kawin, Ethel

University of Chicago Press, \$1.50

Excellent. Written from the point of view that toys are to children's activity what good tools are to the workman. Toys as aids in the development of a wholesome personality. Classified by age groups and by function.

*Play and Toys in Nursery Years*

Hart, Beatrice Tudor

Viking Press, \$2.00





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